

## SUSAN RAY'S LESSON.



ELF-WILLED and ill-tempered! I'm much obliged to you for your good opinion of me, Mr. Arkright."

If anything could have made Susan Ray's pretty face positively ugly, it would have been the look and tone

which accompanied these words. The small red lips had a most unbecoming pout, the deep violet eyes an angry and scornful flash, while the delicately pencilled brows were drawn so closely together, that their arches almost met. The individual addressed, to all appearance, took this outburst very coolly, though inwardly very much annoyed.

"You need feel under no particular obligations to me," he said, quietly, without raising his eyes from the book, whose leaves he was turning with no very definite idea of their meaning. "It is my candid opinion, I am very sorry to say."

"Indeed! Miss Agnes Ward is not ill-tempered in the least, I suppose?"

"Miss Agnes Ward is what you can be, when you choose—a very amiable young lady."

"Why don't you ask her to marry you? I should think you would, she is such a paragon of perfection!"

"Because I don't love her, and I do love somebody else."

"That somebody else ought to feel very much flattered. But if you mean me, let me tell you that the sooner you transfer your affections to her, or some other lady, the better I shall be suited."

"You don't mean what you say, Susan."

"Yes, I do mean what I say," replied the young lady, her cheeks growing very red. "And what is more, I am convinced we are not suited to each other, and that it is best that we part."

Mr. Arkright arose. He had turned slightly pale, and there was a grave look in his eyes, and a quiet expression of the lips, full of significance in one habitually so calm and self-controlled. He deliberately buttoned up his coat and drew on his gloves. Then taking up his hat, he said:

"You will be sorry for what you have said, bye-and-bye," and left the house.

Frank Ray, Susan's brother, had been sitting upon the piazza, during this conversation, and the windows being open, had heard enough to understand its import, and if he had not, Mr. Arkright's grave, absent look, as he passed him, would have given him an inkling of the truth.

Entering the hall, he pushed open the door of the room where his sister was sitting, in an as thoroughly uncomfortable a state of mind as one could possibly conceive.

"You'll lose John, if you are not careful, Sue," he said, after looking at her a moment without speaking.

"I wish you wouldn't meddle with my affairs, Frank," retorted Susan, pettishly. "It would be no great loss, if I should."

"You wouldn't care, I suppose, if he should enlist, as Bert, Laura Dean's betrothed, has?"

The memory of Laura's pale, sad face rose up before her, and she looked a little startled.

"Enlist? He has no thought of enlisting. All his brothers are in the army, and he wouldn't be likely to leave his mother all alone. Besides, the quota is made up."

"I know that, but now that they are on the point of starting, two or three of them would be glad to get a substitute. Wyllis Burt would, I know, for he told me so."

Frank turned carelessly away as he said this, but his words had aroused an unpleasant train of thought in Susan's mind, which she strove vainly to dispel.

"Nonsense!" she said to herself. "Frank is trying to tease me. He knows better. I wish I hadn't said what I did, but John is so provoking. If he would only get angry like other people, and not sit there so cool and calm, and say such disagreeable things. I wish he wasn't so perfect himself, or didn't expect me to be. One don't like to be always in the wrong."

The hearts of John and Susan were drawn together by a strong bond of mutual sympathy and affection, and they both possessed many excellent qualities, yet scarcely a week passed without some such scene as the above, though Susan had never allowed herself to speak such bitter words before, and never had John parted from her in such an ungracious manner.

Truth compels us to acknowledge that Susan was the one at fault. Together with a warm, loving heart, she had a quick, impulsive temper, which often betrayed her into language which she afterwards deeply regretted. The only daughter among a host of sons, in amount of petting was lavished upon her by both parents and brothers, she would have completely spoiled a less kind and ingenuous disposition, and possessing unusual personal beauty, when she reached the age of womanhood, she drew around her a circle of admirers, who would have

fain persuaded her that her very faults were virtues.

Yet she showed her inherent good sense, by passing them all by for honest John Arkright, who, though he took her to his generous heart, as a most dear and precious gift, loving her as only such strong natures can love, not only saw that she had failings, but would have felt that he was false to the trust reposed in him, had he not done his best to make her conscious of them also.

Yet if Susan was most to blame, it is also true that John did not always make due allowance, either for her impulsive temperament, so different from his own, or her youth, for she was six years younger than himself. Neither were his admonitions always well-timed, and though kindly meant, they sounded harshly to the ears accustomed to the language of affectionate approval.

"He said I should be sorry; I wonder what he meant?" was Susan's inward inquiry, many times during the long afternoon, which seemed as though it would never end. At last, weary with combating the troubled, self-reproachful thoughts, that she could not altogether silence, she threw down her work, and sinking back upon the wide, easy lounge upon which she was sitting, fell asleep.

Her dreams took the coloring of her thoughts. She thought she was upon a vast, extended plain, red with blood, and covered with heaps of the slain. The fierce clash of arms and the shock of battle had given place to the groans of the wounded and the dying. With trembling steps she moved here and there, seeking, yet dreading to find the form that had not been absent one moment from her thoughts during all these terrible hours of suspense. At last she found him, with stiffened limbs, pale lip and ashy cheek, his blue, sightless eyes turned up to the murky heavens.

"The forehead of her upright one, and just,

Tired by the hoof of battle to the dust." The sharp cry of agony with which she threw herself upon the dead body of her lover aroused her. She raised up her head, and looked bewildered upon the familiar objects around her.

"Thank God, it was only a dream," she said, with a sigh of relief.

She went out upon the piazza to get rid of the heaviness and lassitude that oppressed her. The sun was down, but the clouds upon the western horizon were tinged with crimson and gold. John had promised to walk out with her in the cool of the evening. Had he forgotten it? Or was he still angry with her?

As these questions passed through her mind, she heard the outside gate



JOHN ARKRIGHT HAS TAKEN HIS PLACE.

open, and turned her eyes eagerly toward the path that led to it. But it was only her little brother Arthur. He came running up the walk, nearly breathless with haste and excitement.

"O, Susan," he exclaimed, as soon as he observed her, "the seventh regiment is going to start in the morning, and the Ashland band will be here, and the firemen are coming out! And only think! Wyllis Burt isn't going, after all. John Arkright has taken his place, and—"

But Susan was gone. With a face from which every vestige of color had fled, she reached her own room. So he was going, she said to herself, and she was the cause of it. If he had decided that it was his duty to go, it would not have seemed half so terrible.

She thought of the strength and nobility of his nature, the tenderness of his heart. Never had he seemed so dear to her. Never had she realized how much, or in how many ways she should miss him. She recalled her dream, and felt that it was a prophecy, that she had seen him upon the field of battle, as he would lay ere long.

"And he was going without bidding her good-bye. She could not have it so. She must see him!"

As she said this she arose, and tying on her hat, and covering her light muslin dress with a large, dark mantle, stole out of the house. She passed rapidly along the nearly deserted streets, until she came to the pleasant little cottage where John lived with his widowed mother. She had never been inside of it, but had often looked at it admiringly, as it stood embowered in

fruit and shade trees, rose-bushes and clustering vines, and never before without thinking that sometime it was to be her home as well as his.

She mounted the steps, and rang the bell. Mrs. Arkright came to the door. Susan almost dreaded to look into her face, feeling that she might justly reproach her with being the cause of the loss she was about to sustain, the support and championship of her only child. But to her relief her countenance wore the same kind and placid look that was its prevailing expression, though she seemed somewhat surprised at her unexpected appearance.

"Is John in?" inquired Susan, falteringly.

"Yes. He complained of a headache, and has been at home nearly all the afternoon. Come into the parlor, and I'll speak to him."

Susan rose to her feet as she heard the sound of that step along the hall, and a moment later the door opened and John entered. The cold, stern look faded from his lip and brow as he looked upon her pale, agitated countenance.

"What has happened, Susan?" he inquired, in a tone of concern.

"O, John!" exclaimed Susan, "as though you did not know, and that it was the worst thing that could happen! Not that I mean to reproach you, for I know it is all my fault!"

"It may seem unmaidenly in me to come here unasked," she continued, raising her head from his shoulder; "but I felt as if I could not let you go away without telling you how sorry, how very sorry I am for what I said to you this morning. That wherever you go you will take my heart with you. That if you are killed, I shall not care to live!"

Here her head again dropped upon his shoulder. The expression upon John's countenance as he looked upon the weeping girl was singularly conflicting: the eyes had a world of love and sympathy in them, while a half-pleased, half-rough smile lingered around the mouth.

"So you really love me a little?" he said, making a vain effort to lift her forehead from his shoulder, so he could look into her eyes.

"I love you very much, John. I never knew how much until now," she replied, still keeping her face hid from him.

"And you don't want me to propose to Miss Ward?"

"O, John, please don't allude to those foolish words," said Susan, in such a tone of distress, that John was instantly sobered.

"Well, I won't again," he said, in a very different tone. "But, Susan, when and how did you hear that I was going away?"

Susan told him.

"And did it never occur to you that I have a cousin with that name?" Susan started, her eyes flashing with surprise and joy.

"Is it your cousin who is going?" she exclaimed.

"It isn't I," said John, smiling.

"O, John, I am so glad. It seems as if I was never half so happy before!"

"I, too, am very happy, Susan. Shall I tell you why this mistake has made me happy?" said John, looking down earnestly into the eyes that were lifted to his.

Susan guessed something of his meaning, for the lashes, still wet with tears, drooped, until they rested upon the flushed cheeks.

"It is because I was beginning to doubt, not my love for you, but yours for me. Because I was beginning to distrust my ability to make you as happy as I should wish my wife to be. Do you understand why, Susan?"

"I understand, John. And I will try never to give you reason to entertain any such fears again."

John kissed the sweet lips that spoke these gentle words.

"Dear Susan," he said, "you have such a kind, loving heart, and such an earnest desire to do right, that I am sure you will succeed; and as for me, I feel that I never fully understood you until now, and will, God helping me, be more patient with you than I have been." And they both kept their word.

Dear reader, a word in your ear. All lovers' quarrels do not terminate so happily. If you have won the love of a true and faithful heart, try it not too far. As the constant dropping of water will wear the hardest stone, so will frequent altercations, though followed by reconciliation, weaken the strongest affection, often planting in its stead indifference, if not positive aversion.

### Incorrigible Dr. Johnson.

A literary lady once expressed to Dr. Johnson her approval of his dictionary and particularly her satisfaction in finding that he had not admitted any improper words.

"No, madam," replied the incorrigible Johnson, "I hope I have not soiled my fingers. I find, however, that you have been looking for them."

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